

Smith Valley Conservation District

Annual Report

Monitoring For Effectiveness

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The West Walker River is a valuable resource for all stakeholders in Smith Valley, therefore, SVCD has taken the lead in implementing river stabilization projects to improve water quality and wildlife habitat. Over the past decade, Smith and Mason Valley Conservation Districts (S&MVCD) have installed a total of 12 of these projects using a multitude of hard and soft engineering techniques. Nevada Division of Environmental Protection awarded SVCD a grant to revisit these sites over the next three years to develop a repeatable monitoring protocol, implement any maintenance tasks and determine the effectiveness of each technique used. The proposed outcomes will be a better understanding which techniques are better suited for our conditions and an electronic presentation of District activities to be shared with District constituents, State Conservation Commission and funding sources.

Over the last year, SVCD has review and organized all project data including designs, pre and post construction surveys and all photos for a comparison study to be completed winter 2009. SVCD successfully resurveyed all project sites in the fall of 2009, completed low flow photo monitoring in January 2009 and high flow photo monitoring June 2009. SVCD provided many training opportunities for its employees. They employees attended NRCS Stream Visual Assessment Protocol training to learn about the updated SVAP protocol in May 2009. SVCD is implementing portions of this protocol for their project effectiveness monitoring. Michelle Langsdorf attended a 5 day course in Truckee, CA entitles "Geomorphic and Ecological Fundamentals for river and Stream Restoration" sponsored by University CA Berkley.



*Top: Borsini Project site installed 1998
Bottom: Borsini Project site June 2009*

One Weed At A Time

SVCD targeted noxious weed management as a priority for the area. During the last year, we actively participated with the Walker River Basin Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) serving as co-chair of the group. Using CWMA funds, we were able to give Smith Valley landowners herbicides to treat noxious weeds located. In addition, for the fourth consecutive year, we treated perennial pepperweed (*Lepidium latifolium*) for several Smith Valley landowners. With each annual application of herbicide, there has been a reduction in amount of perennial pepperweed found which is very encouraging.

US Fish and Wildlife Service, using Desert Terminal Lakes Program funding, awarded Smith and Mason Valley Conservation Districts a cooperative agreement to begin a multiyear/multiphase noxious weed inventory and treatment program using a watershed approach. Both the Service and Districts recognized that in order for a noxious weed management project to be effective, it is important to address these weeds at the headwaters and continue downstream because the river is a major vector for noxious weed spread in the system.



Michelle Langsdorf, District Manager, attended the Tamarisk and Russian Olive Conference in Reno, NV February 18-20, 2009 where management and control techniques were discussed. In addition, Michelle Langsdorf and Joshua Dini, seasonal field crew leader, attended a pesticide applicator training in Las Vegas January 19-21, 2009 where both were certified by the State of Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDOA) to use restricted use pesticides.

New WRB CWMA Activities

Spring 2009 SVCD was awarded a grant from NDOA to continue Walker River Basin Cooperative Weed Management Area activities with one additional requirement, at least \$1000 of the funding must be used for biocontrol related activities. In May 2009 SVCD began selecting sites for tamarisk beetle releases in the headwaters of the East Walker River; however, before the release NDOA implemented a moratorium on additional releases of the insect. As a result, in June 2009 SVCD began selecting sites to release *Ceutorhynchus litura*, a Canada thistle stem mining weevil, August 2009.

Robin Powell, Audubon Society, assisted SVCD with a noxious weed display at the Smith Valley Library May 2009. Smith Valley residents were able to see lifelike models of yellowstar thistle and spotted knapweed and were encouraged to take models home or share with neighbors with one requirement, "Please do not spread." The Library enjoyed the display and asked if the display could return next spring.





Perennial Pepperweed (tall whitetop) infestation along the East

SV Landowners Doing Their Part

Hunewill Land and Livestock are doing their part to reduce perennial pepperweed (tall whitetop) in Smith Valley. For the past four summers, SVCD has assisted the ranch treating this noxious weed for relatively low cost to the ranch. With each year we are able to treat more areas due to the reduced abundance of plants. The Hunewill's are one of the many Smith Valley great land stewards.

Walker River Basin Workdays

The following is an article submitted to the Mason Valley News by SVCD.

"On November 4, 2008, sixty-eight Smith Valley School students and fifteen volunteers braved the cold, blustery wind and occasional snow flurry to participate in the second annual "Walker River Basin Workdays." Steven Fulstone graciously allowed the students to return to his property for a second year. High school students led six different stations teaching elementary students about water conservation, properties of water, groundwater contamination, thunderstorm development & preparedness and riparian restoration. The students put the work into "workday" by harvesting buffalo-berry seeds to propagate in the Smith Valley School greenhouse to be later planted at other sites in Smith Valley.

Science, conservation and agricultural education is best followed using the "Walker River Basin Workdays" motto printed on the participants t-shirts, "Tell me and I'll forget, Show me and I may remember, Involve me and I will understand." According to Michelle Langsdorf, Mason and Smith Valley Conservation Districts, who assisted in the event coordination stated, "The students really enjoyed the hands on approach to learning about the river." Langsdorf would like to thank all of those who volunteered to make the day run smoothly.

RN Fulstone Ranch, Mason & Smith Valley Conservation Districts, Western Nevada Resource Conservation & Development Council, Lyon & Mineral Counties, Walker River Irrigation District, University Nevada Cooperative Extension (Lyon & Mineral Counties), school districts (Lyon, Mineral & Mono Counties), Walker River Project and many others sponsored workdays in Bridgeport, CA, Smith Valley, NV and Schurz, NV."



Smith Valley 4-6th and 9-12th grades November 2008

Year to Year Business

Throughout the year, the District continues to participate in meetings with Walker River Irrigation District, Nevada Weed Action Committee, Walker River Basin Cooperative Weed Management Area, Walker River Restoration Advisory Group, Geographic Priority Area meetings on the Walker River, Nevada Division of Forestry Forest Stewardship Committee and other natural resource or conservation topics of interest to the SVCD.



East Walker River 2009

We also fulfill our reporting duties to our grantors, the State of Nevada, and the Conservation Commission, play an active role in community-based projects, continue to develop and implement programs to protect and conserve our natural resources and participate in Nevada Association of Conservation Districts activities.

National Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting



Smith and Mason Valley Conservation Districts were featured a 2008 report authored by the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) showcasing Districts taking the lead in watershed scale projects and encouraging collaboration amongst all watershed stakeholders. In addition, we were asked to present at the NACD annual meeting February 2009. We sincerely thank our East Walker River Noxious Weed Inventory and Treatment project partners for helping us receive this honor and NVACD, NDOA, USFWS and NDEP for sponsoring the travel expenses.

The Annual Report and Financial Report for July 1, 2008 — June 30, 2009 were approved at the regularly scheduled Board of Supervisors meeting September 22, 2009.